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Security Council

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Friday, 7 August 2009, 10.30 a.m.
New York

President:	Sir John Sawers	(United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland)
Members:	Austria	Mr. Mayr-Harting
	Burkina Faso	Mr. Tiendrébéogo
	China	Mr. Liu Zhenmin
	Costa Rica	Mr. Guillermet
	Croatia	Mr. Vilović
	France	Mr. Lacroix
	Japan	Mr. Okuda
	Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	Mr. Dabbashi
	Mexico	Mr. Heller
	Russian Federation	Mr. Shcherbak
	Turkey	Mr. Çorman
	Uganda	Mr. Mugoya
	United States of America	Ms. Rice
	Viet Nam	Mr. Bui The Giang

Agenda

Women and peace and security

Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to Security Council resolution 1820 (2008) (S/2009/362)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.30 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Women and peace and security

Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to Security Council resolution 1820 (2008) (S/2009/362)

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Afghanistan, Argentina, Australia, Bangladesh, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Cape Verde, Ecuador, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Israel, Italy, Kenya, Liechtenstein, the Netherlands, Nigeria, Norway, Papua New Guinea, Peru, the Republic of Korea, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Sweden, Switzerland, Timor-Leste and the United Republic of Tanzania, in which they request to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the consideration of the item, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, the representatives of the aforementioned countries took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President: The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Security Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

I wish to draw the attention of members of the Council to document S/2009/362, which contains the report of the Secretary-General pursuant to Security Council resolution 1820 (2008).

I should like to start by welcoming the Secretary-General, who joins us today to present his first follow-up report to resolution 1820 (2008) on women, peace and security.

In addition, I should like to extend our welcome and thanks to three female United Nations police officers from United Nations missions in Liberia, Haiti and the Sudan, who are here to observe our debate. Yesterday, they attended a round-table event at the United Nations that was sponsored by the Canadian Mission and the Pearson Peacekeeping Training Centre. It is important that we have opportunities in New York to hear from field practitioners dealing with those difficult issues.

Resolution 1820 (2008) builds upon resolution 1325 (2000). It confirms the Council's readiness to address more systematically the scourge of conflict-related sexual violence. It also underlines the vital contribution that women themselves can make as peacekeepers and peacebuilders.

Our objective today is to hear the views of colleagues from across the United Nations membership to aid Council consideration of the way forward in the light of the Secretary-General's report.

I now invite the Secretary-General to take the floor.

The Secretary-General: I commend your initiative, Mr. President, to convene this Security Council debate on one of the important priorities of the United Nations: women, peace and security.

Despite some progress over two decades, the deliberate targeting of civilians through acts of sexual violence continues on a widespread and systematic basis. Parties to armed conflict continue to use sexual violence with efficient brutality. Like a grenade or a gun, sexual violence is part of their arsenal to pursue military, political, social and economic aims. The perpetrators generally operate with impunity.

I have met victims of sexual violence. I am haunted by their testimony, and I will not relent in calling on States and non-State parties to prevent those terrible crimes. Beyond its enormous toll on victims, sexual violence in armed conflict hurts recovery and peacebuilding. In Burundi, Liberia and Sierra Leone, the fighting may have ended but sexual violence persists on a very serious scale. We are helping those countries to recover, but we must also do more to prevent others from suffering the same fate.

My report (S/2009/362) highlights where States and other parties must act. I also call on the Security Council to focus on concrete actions. Allow me to briefly underscore four areas.

First, preventing and responding to sexual violence requires a multisectoral response, the pillars of which are interdependent. The efforts of the United Nations system reach across our main work areas from the normative to the operational. I am committed to strengthening the United Nations system to ensure that we deliver as one.

Secondly, sexual violence should be addressed from the planning to the implementation of mandates. Our actions must be focused and sustained over time to achieve results, as the causes and consequences of sexual violence are often intractable. I am pleased that the issue will be included in the terms of reference for technical assessment missions and the integrated mission planning process. Peacekeeping missions and United Nations country teams will establish joint priorities in that regard through integrated strategic frameworks.

I am also working with my top advisers to ensure that the United Nations gives priority attention to preventing and responding to sexual violence. Yesterday, in my meeting with force commanders, I gave a clear and strong instruction that military leaders should keep that issue as the top priority in working to maintain peace and security. I call on Council members and other States, as well as civilian and military leaders, to join forces to address that grave problem. I repeat: No act of sexual exploitation and abuse by any United Nations personnel will be tolerated.

Thirdly, I urge the General Assembly to conclude its deliberations on the creation of a United Nations institution to advance gender equality and women's human rights. I am also in discussions with the United Nations system partners on appointing a new senior system-wide official to address sexual violence. I am considering that in the light of the General Assembly's discussions and existing mechanisms, such as the Special Rapporteur on violence against women and the Special Representative on Children and Armed Conflict. I am also studying the additional costs that this would entail.

Fourthly, we must improve monitoring, investigation and documentation to address the many challenges that we face in gathering information and reporting on sexual violence. We will also continue to promote a greater understanding of resolution 1820 (2008) in all United Nations missions and duty stations and to adapt our approaches and systems, including for monitoring and reporting, to support its effective implementation.

The recommendations in my report are mutually reinforcing. If they are carried out together, we can foster greater progress. Those recommendations are also designed to provide the Council with more consistent, evidence-based and timely information to help it in addressing that challenge.

Towards that end, I urge the Council to immediately authorize the establishment of an independent commission of inquiry, supported by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. It would be tasked with investigating and reporting on violations of international humanitarian and human rights law in ongoing conflict situations in Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Sudan. That independent commission of inquiry should recommend to the Council the most effective mechanisms to ensure accountability for those egregious crimes.

I also draw the Council's attention to the brutal, predatory and deliberate targeting of civilians by the Lord's Resistance Army, whose activities have destabilized civilians in the Sudan, the Central African Republic, Uganda and the Democratic People's Republic of the Congo.

I am prepared to submit an annual report on resolution 1820 (2008). I want to help ensure that all parties respect their obligations under international law and are held accountable when they violate them. Victims of sexual violence are among the world's most vulnerable and traumatized people. For the sake of these innocent women and men, their families and their societies, we must come together and act. That will help victims in war-torn countries and set us on a course for a better world.

The President: I thank the Secretary-General for his statement and for his leadership on this issue.

In accordance with the understanding reached among Security Council members, I wish to remind all speakers to limit their statements to no more than five minutes, in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously. Delegations with lengthy statements are kindly requested to circulate the text in writing and to deliver a condensed version when speaking in the Chamber.

I shall now give the floor to members of the Security Council.

Ms. Rice (United States of America): Mr. President, I want to begin by thanking you and your delegation for hosting this very important event and for ensuring that it remains front and centre on the Council's agenda. I also want to thank the Secretary-General very much for his important report (S/2009/362) and his very helpful recommendations, as well as for his presence here today.

Throughout history, sexual violence has often occurred in places racked by armed conflict. But over the past decade, reporting from several countries has confirmed that rape is becoming increasingly frequent and brutal, and in some places a systematic weapon of war. In response, the Security Council has adopted resolution 1820 (2008), repeatedly condemned these crimes and called on all parties to immediately end acts of rape and sexual violence during armed conflicts.

But thousands of women and girls are still being gang-raped, mutilated, assaulted and forced into sexual slavery every single day. This we must end. I will never forget when we took our trip to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and met with two very eloquent victims of rape and sexual violence at the Heal Africa Hospital. They spoke movingly of the horrible, horrible crimes they had experienced. After our discussion, I had the opportunity briefly to speak privately with the older of those two women. She pulled me aside, I think looking to me as the one woman on the Security Council at present. She asked me, with tears in her eyes, to do everything I could, and that we could, to end this horrible systematic violence that she and so many others had experienced. I gave her my word that I would, and, with the cooperation and support of my fellow Council members, I intend to keep my word.

This is because sexual assaults against women are often committed in front of their husbands and children, and they do more than inflict appalling physical, mental and emotional injuries on their victims. They can also spread HIV/AIDS and other diseases, produce unwanted children who become neglected or orphans and undermine families and communities when the survivors are stigmatized and shamed. All too often, the result is a smouldering anger and an insatiable desire for revenge that only worsens the violence and makes peace agreements all the harder to reach or sustain.

We must end these atrocities. We must better protect women and girls, halt the impunity that perpetrators enjoy and make it easier to achieve lasting and inclusive peace. To succeed, we need to ensure that rapists and other perpetrators of sexual violence are identified and punished. We need sustained efforts to prevent new acts of sexual violence, including by increasing human rights training and vetting for members of domestic security forces. We also need quality and accessible treatment for survivors of rape and abuse.

At the same time, we need to collect more data on sexual violence, share United Nations reporting more widely and bring that information into the Security Council in real time. The Secretary-General's report includes several recommendations that could dramatically improve current practice. Building on resolution 1820 (2008), the United States urges the Council to consider these recommendations seriously and to act swiftly on them.

Job one is to hold perpetrators accountable, and so the United States supports credible domestic or hybrid and international accountability mechanisms that investigate and prosecute these crimes, particularly in countries incapable of bringing such criminals to effective justice. We aim to build State capacity to enforce the rule of law through a range of measures, from technical assistance through training by international lawyers to assistance in drafting legislation.

In this regard, I would like to say a few words specifically about the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where the interlinked problems of sexual violence and impunity are particularly grave. According to the United Nations Population Fund, nearly 16,000 new cases of sexual violence were registered throughout the country in 2008, with 65 per cent of those cases involving children. Yet data collected from provincial health centres between 2005 and 2007 suggest that Congolese courts heard only 2 per cent of the registered rape cases in the conflict-ridden eastern Congo.

Some cases against accused Congolese perpetrators of mass atrocities are pending in the International Criminal Court, but we should establish other mechanisms for ensuring accountability and bringing perpetrators to justice. A commission of inquiry, as suggested by the Secretary-General, is one option that deserves serious consideration. The Council

should also explore deployment of technical assistance teams to develop the capacity to combat sexual violence in all conflict zones. These teams could determine the feasibility of establishing a dedicated chamber in domestic courts that would prosecute war crimes and crimes against humanity, with a substantial focus on sexual and gender-based violence.

We welcome the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo's recently announced zero-tolerance policy for members of its security forces who commit sexual violence. We also welcome the April 2009 launch of a comprehensive strategy by the United Nations and the Congolese Government for combating gender-based violence. And we will continue to insist on the complete resolution of the five cases discussed by the Council earlier this week. We welcome the efforts of the United Nations Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) and the recent approval of a six-officer sexual violence unit to help the Mission implement its protection mandate, and we encourage MONUC to work further with the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo on this immense problem. And we will work with the Congolese and all stakeholders to help craft more effective solutions.

Next, we need specialized leadership and high-level attention at the United Nations, to focus on implementing the goals of resolution 1820 (2008). The United States believes that the appointment of a high-level special representative on women and peace and security by the Secretary-General for a specified period of time would help focus the Secretariat's efforts. This time-limited mandate would be to review and streamline multisectoral responses to sexual violence in conflict situations, promote integrated and coordinated approaches, bolster the role of women in peace negotiations and peacekeeping operations, and promote accountability for the implementation of resolution 1820 (2008).

Thirdly, we should use targeted measures to thwart sexual violence as a tactic of war. We fully support the report's recommendations on incorporating provisions on sexual violence in armed conflict into existing sanctions regimes, as appropriate. To best apply such targeted measures and give the Council the up-to-date information it needs, information-sharing among all Council-mandated bodies is essential. The Secretary-General's relevant Special Representatives and emergency relief coordinators should work with Member States to develop comprehensive, joint Government-United Nations strategies for combating sexual violence, in consultation with all relevant stakeholders. They should also provide regular updates on sexual violence in their reporting to the Secretary-General and the Security Council.

Fourthly, to curb rape and sexual violence by military officers, we must create a culture of awareness and accountability within national militaries, starting with the top commanders and marching all the way down the chain of command. Neither soldiers nor officers should be able to commit sexual violence, especially with impunity. Perpetrators must not be promoted. We must work to build up effective vetting mechanisms that will exclude persons who face credible allegations and evidence of crimes.

We in the international community need to explore ways to foster such a culture of accountability through better training, capacity-building and other targeted programmes. And the United Nations needs to lead by example, by actively enforcing the zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse by United Nations peacekeepers. Simply put, abusers cannot be allowed to serve in United Nations peacekeeping missions, now or in the future.

Efforts to combat sexual violence must also be placed squarely on the political agenda when countries are searching for lasting stability and peace. The United Nations and its Member States and future mediators should address sexual violence in today's peace processes and include them from the very start in future peace talks. In addition, we must include more women as mediators and members of negotiating teams.

During last year's open debate on sexual violence (see S/PV.5916), the former Division Commander of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) warned against the troubling dynamic of men with guns forgiving other men with guns for crimes committed against women. If peace processes are to succeed and endure, they must avoid this pitfall.

Finally, reporting by the Secretary-General on sexual violence in conflict zones is critically important to all these efforts, and we endorse the Secretary-General's recommendation to extend a standing invitation to the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Special Rapporteur on violence against

women and the Chairperson of the United Nations Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict to provide additional briefings on sexual violence and to supplement the information received from the Special Representatives and the emergency relief coordinators as the situation arises. We also want continued annual reporting on this topic by the Secretary-General and we welcome his commitment to provide it.

Beyond the measures that the Security Council can take, important aspects of the problem of sexual violence must be pursued in other bodies, including in the General Assembly's discussion of a new gender architecture. We will work with other stakeholders within the United Nations system and non-government organizations to end impunity and assist the victims of rape and sexual assault.

We have a great deal to do to fully implement resolution 1820 (2008). Putting this topic on the world's agenda was an important step forward, but it was just a first step. We now look forward to working with our fellow Council members, the Secretariat and other partners to bring a halt to and prevent further sexual violence in armed conflict once and for all. The task is massive, and the time is now.

Mr. Çorman (Turkey): I thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive briefing and for his presence among us today. We are also thankful for his detailed report (S/2009/362).

A great number of the casualties in armed conflicts continue to be civilians, and that number is constantly increasing. We have been witnessing serious challenges in securing a safe environment for women in many parts of the world. Within this context, sexual violence, particularly against women and children, are also on the rise. We condemn in the strongest possible terms all deliberate attacks on civilians, including women and children, as well as any kind of sexual violence used as a tool of war in armed conflict.

It is within that framework that we welcome the Secretary-General's report, which gives us a comprehensive account of the most recent situation in various theatres and the difficulties that are being encountered. The report shows the huge task we are facing. We should make a collective effort to prevent sexual violence against women, with the primary obligation and responsibility resting first and foremost with States.

The Secretary-General's report puts forward useful recommendations. They are pertinent, detailed and well crafted, and we support all of them in principle. However, we also believe that any issue related to the protection of civilians, including women and children, should be handled carefully, since these are all sensitive cases. In this vein, I wish to make four preliminary observations.

First, we agree with the necessity of the Security Council taking a fresh look at the protection of civilians, in particular women and children. A few days ago, here in this Chamber, we adopted resolution 1882 (2009) to protect children in armed conflict in a comprehensive manner. We believe that that resolution was the right step in the right direction. However, when establishing new mechanisms we should also be careful: creating a plethora of institutions carries the risk of causing duplication. As the Secretary-General rightly pointed out in his report, the United Nations should deliver as one to prevent and respond to sexual violence. Therefore, taking into account the system-wide coherence process, we should first efficiently use to their fullest extent, and perhaps sharpen, existing tools and mechanisms, including all the avenues and special procedures of the Human Rights Council–and the machinery of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Secondly, as rightly indicated in the Secretary-General's report, data needs to be more systematically collected, preserved and analysed. However, we are also aware of the difficulties that United Nations actors and non-governmental organization workers are confronting while collecting data.

Thirdly, we believe that another important issue is the situation of camps for refugees and internally displaced persons. Protection of the civilian nature of those camps is vital. The United Nations and the host countries are responsible for the preservation of their civilian status. Violation of that status, either by outsiders or by insiders who bear arms, will only jeopardize vulnerable persons in those camps, in particular women, who could face the most heinous crimes.

Fourthly, we must prevent sexual violence, fight impunity and address the issue of discrimination against women, both in legislation and in practice. This effort should be accompanied by assistance to victims. We should also look into enhancing the possible role of

peacekeeping forces in the prevention of these unacceptable crimes.

Finally, I would stress that it is only through the strengthening of the rule of law, enhanced political participation, human rights, democracy and good governance that we can secure the long-term and lasting protection of women. As a party to the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women since 1985 and having ratified the Convention's Optional Protocol in 2002, my Government believes that it should be our priority to encourage all nations to adhere to the principles of those international documents. We also support the Global Campaign to end violence against women initiated by the Secretary-General at the opening of the fifty-second session of the Commission on the Status of Women in February 2008.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize that Turkey is ready to participate in and positively contribute to every effort to eliminate sexual violence and discrimination against women.

Mr. Lacroix (France) (*spoke in French*): First of all, I would like to thank the United Kingdom for having taken the initiative of holding this ninth open debate on women and peace and security. I would also like to welcome the Secretary-General here today and to thank him for the presentation of his first report on implementation of resolution 1820 (2008). More broadly, we welcome his determined commitment to this issue. My delegation, of course, completely supports the statement that will be made by the Permanent Representative of Sweden on behalf of the European Union.

The Secretary-General's assessment of sexual violence is, unfortunately, definitive. Sexual violence is widespread and often systematic, and is sometimes even used as a weapon of war in several regions and in many situations on the Council's agenda. The United Nations has a special and critical role to play in responding to this phenomenon. In many instances, it has specific tools to assist national authorities in supporting the victims of sexual violence, prosecuting and trying suspects, and arresting those who are guilty of such crimes. The Organization also has the responsibility to encourage relevant authorities to act to that end.

At the initiative of France, the fight against sexual violence was a high priority of the Security Council's annual visit to Africa in May. Because we believe in the value of deterrence in the struggle against impunity, we argued with the authorities of the Democratic Republic of the Congo for five officers accused of perpetrating sexual violence to be brought to justice. Earlier this week, the Council noted with satisfaction that judicial procedures had been launched against those individuals and that they had been removed from their command duties. That is an important message in the fight against sexual violence and impunity. The United Nations and the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo played an important role in achieving that outcome. The Council will continue to monitor the matter closely.

France also welcomes the significant institutional progress that was achieved two days ago with the adoption of resolution 1882 (2009), which, inter alia, extends the reporting and monitoring mechanism of resolution 1612 (2005) to sexual violence committed against children, regardless of whether or not child soldiers are involved. The extension will allow the Security Council and the international community to focus greater attention and response on this widespread phenomenon, which targets girls in particular.

In his report (S/2009/362), the Secretary-General notes that many interesting initiatives have been undertaken to address the gravity of the situation. We must strengthen those initiatives and ensure the dissemination of good practices. The role of peacekeeping operations is essential in that respect, and I welcome the presence here of female police officers deployed in those operations. To the extent possible and necessary, peacekeeping operations must develop ambitious strategies to address sexual violence. They must engage in dialogue with the parties to armed conflicts, and their components — primarily gender and human rights advisers, as well as special representatives of the Secretary-General — must take every opportunity to make the parties aware of their obligations in this area and to encourage them to change their behaviour. We hope that the parties' response to the issue, or lack thereof, will be reflected in the Secretary-General's next report so that we can be better informed and assess to the best of our ability the international community's action and progress with respect to the scourge.

France welcomes the work undertaken by the sanctions committees on the matter under consideration

today. Pursuant to the commitment it made in resolution 1820 (2008), the Security Council must systematically consider the relevance of including sexual violence among the triggers of sanctions during the establishment or revision of the committees' mandates. When the criteria are met, it will be up to the committees' experts to raise the matter.

In that regard, we recall the role of France, alongside the United Kingdom, Belgium and the United States, in the inclusion by the sanctions committee on the Democratic Republic of the Congo of the names of four members of the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda on the list of those targeted for individual sanctions.

France welcomes the set of recommendations proposed by the Secretary-General to strengthen our action against sexual violence. We are ready to play an active role in any initiative to promote Security Council action on those recommendations as soon as possible. For our part, we believe that the implementation of the following proposals, referred to by the Secretary-General in his statement, is of special importance.

First, the Secretary-General should submit to the Council an annual report on the implementation of resolution 1820 (2008). We invite him to formulate proposals on the modalities for the Security Council's consideration of measures taken by parties to a conflict to meet their obligations, including in the fight against impunity, and its identification of appropriate steps in response.

Secondly, a commission of inquiry should be established. France endorses the concept of creating a commission to investigate and advocate the most effective mechanisms for prosecuting those who commit sexual violence. The commission's competence should be limited to sexual violence, and its work coordinated with peacekeeping operations mandated to counter sexual violence. In that respect, we would be interested to learn more about the criteria that led the Secretary-General to propose that we focus initially on three geographical situations. We are ready to discuss that and should like the Secretariat to explain how it foresees extending that mechanism in its future phases.

The third and last proposal that I wish to highlight is that of appointing an official to lead the fight against sexual violence throughout the entire United Nations system. We strongly endorse that proposal.

In conclusion, I reiterate France's full commitment to fighting sexual violence against women. The Council can rest assured of our full commitment to that issue within the Security Council in the months to come and of our resolve to pursue our efforts to strengthen the role of women in conflict prevention and settlement and in rebuilding peace in the context of the follow-up to resolution 1325 (2000), which we will be discussing shortly and concerning which there remains a great deal to be done.

Mr. Mayr-Harting (Austria): I would first like to thank you, Sir, and the United Kingdom presidency for organizing this debate. I would also like to welcome the Secretary-General. Austria applauds him for his unwavering commitment in the fight against all forms of violence against women.

The adoption of resolution 1820 (2008) a year ago was an historical event. The resolution clearly states that sexual violence against women in armed conflict can constitute a threat to international peace and security that requires the attention of the Security Council. Despite positive and successful steps undertaken by the United Nations and individual States, women continue to fall victim to sexual violence used as a deliberate means of warfare. This takes place on a daily basis in conflict situations around the world.

Austria aligns itself with the statement to be delivered by the representative of Sweden on behalf of the European Union, as well as with that to be made by the representative of Costa Rica on behalf of the Human Security Network. I would like to concentrate on a number of practical proposals on how the Council could further improve its action on this important matter.

Systematic attention needs to be paid to the prevention of and protection from sexual violence in the daily deliberations of the Council. We welcome the recent adoption of resolution 1882 (2009), extending the scope of the monitoring and reporting mechanism to parties who perpetrate grave sexual violence against children in situations of armed conflict. As women and girls represent the majority of victims of sexual violence, there is a need to ensure that reporting is not strictly limited to victims under the age of 18. In this context, we would welcome further information in a

follow-up report next year on an appropriate monitoring and accountability mechanism to be established by the Council.

Austria also welcomes the work of the Council's informal Expert Group on the Protection of Civilians, which we see as a useful forum for discussing important protection concerns, including those in the fight against sexual violence.

More consistent and comprehensive reporting on sexual violence in the Secretary-General's country-specific reports would enable the Council to address the protection of civilians, particularly women and children, from sexual violence in a more systematic manner. To this end, the Council should include specific reporting requirements in resolutions establishing or renewing mandates.

Briefings by the Secretary-General's special representatives, the Emergency Relief Coordinator, the High Commissioner for Human Rights and relevant rapporteurs will and can also provide the Council with information crucial to its work.

We are fully aware of the sensitivities of collecting data from victims of sexual violence, who are often severely traumatized by the dramatic experiences they have gone through. Guidelines on information gathering must take ethical and safety concerns into account. Short- and long-term assistance for survivors of sexual violence, in particular accessible and quality health care, psychosocial support and legal advice should be a priority.

Let me also acknowledge the vital role that non-governmental organizations and humanitarian organizations play in this regard. Access constraints for humanitarian actors can severely affect the situation of victims of sexual violence.

Today, a clear body of rules outlawing sexual violence, including in armed conflict, is contained in international human rights, humanitarian and international criminal law. In spite of this, perpetrators who systematically commit serious violations against women and girls still go largely unpunished. Allegations of sexual violence need to be thoroughly investigated and perpetrators need to be brought to account, including not only through prosecution, but also through the vetting of armed and security forces.

This situation demands further action by the Security Council to strengthen the rule of law and to end impunity. Where necessary, the Council should consider appropriate measures encouraging and ensuring accountability for those responsible for international crimes, including through the establishment of commissions of inquiry, referrals to the International Criminal Court and the imposition of targeted measures. Sanctions committees need to receive relevant information to this end, including through exchanges with other subsidiary bodies.

The Council took an important step when deciding to give priority to the protection of civilians in the mandate of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC). This led to the subsequent adoption of the Comprehensive Strategy on Combating Sexual Violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, endorsed by the Government.

It is also a very important and positive development that the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo has now finally decided to take concrete measures in the five particularly dramatic cases to which the Council once again drew the attention of that country's authorities during its mission there. It is evidently necessary that the Council continue to follow up on this matter.

We are encouraged by the valuable work of MONUC's new joint protection teams. We must draw on lessons learned by such best practices in order to transpose them to the contexts of other missions. That is certainly an issue with which we will have to deal when we consider, in general terms, the subject of the protection of civilians in peacekeeping.

The active contribution of women to peacebuilding and conflict prevention is crucial to achieving lasting peace. Resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008) have underlined the need to include women in peacekeeping and peacebuilding measures. Further efforts are needed. The development of gender guidelines for military personnel by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the development of guidelines for mediators and their consistent implementation can contribute to improving our response to sexual violence in conflict settings.

In order to effectively fight sexual violence, improved coordination throughout the system, as well as leadership and accountability, are needed. Austria fully supports the appointment of a senior person with responsibility to attend to the prevention of and

response to sexual violence across the entire United Nations system.

Austria is grateful for the Secretary-General's willingness to provide the Council with annual reports on this very important matter, and we look forward to receiving them in the interest of enhancing the implementation of resolution 1820 (2008).

Mr. Okuda (Japan): I thank you, Mr. President, for presiding over today's important debate on sexual violence in armed conflict.

I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for personally presenting his first report (S/2009/362) pursuant to resolution 1820 (2008). We also commend the invaluable efforts of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to collect the information and insights from many stakeholders that made this report possible.

The unanimous adoption of resolution 1820 (2008) by the Security Council last year was a milestone because, through the agency of the Council, the international community recognized that sexual violence committed amidst armed conflict is a security issue. Such violence, when used as a strategy for waging war, not only causes physical and psychological damage to the victims, but also significantly sets back any momentum that may have been generated towards achieving peace and security.

In the year that has passed since the resolution was adopted, it is clear that some progress has been made in protecting civilians from sexual violence. As mentioned in the report, United Nations peacekeeping missions have strengthened their mandates to provide effective protection, including in response to sexual violence. The Peacebuilding Commission has also been active in addressing this issue, and civil society has enhanced its advocacy activities.

Japan is also pleased that, by unanimously adopting resolution 1882 (2009), the Council has now strengthened its responses to rape and other sexual violence against children in armed conflict. The implementation of resolution 1820 (2008) nevertheless faces many challenges. We are deeply concerned, for example, that grievous sexual violence continues to be rampant in a number of countries, including the Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Chad.

Now is the time to translate the commitment we made in that resolution into concrete action. While the report addresses a broad range of issues, I would like to focus here on three points that we regard as particularly important: data collection and reporting, impunity and accountability, and coordination within the United Nations system.

The first important challenge we face is to clarify what our objectives are in collecting data, to enhance the systems we employ to that end, and to report on sexual violence. In order for the international community, and the Security Council in particular, to be able to act against sexual violence in armed conflict, accurate data collection on the ground and timely reporting are vital. We therefore welcome the decision of the Secretary-General to take action to "ensure more coherent, comprehensive and regular reporting on sexual violence" (*S/2009/362, para. 53*) through the senior-level Mission focal point system. This system will expand the capacity of a mission to engage in monitoring and reporting and to "coordinate with the United Nations country team to review current data collection methods and databases" (ibid.) with a view to enabling the reporting mechanism to produce more coherent and comprehensive information.

Bearing in mind the newly adopted resolution 1882 (2009), United Nations agencies concerned with sexual violence need to increase their cooperation with the monitoring and reporting mechanisms led by the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and UNICEF.

In collecting data on sexual violence and in the light of the sensitivity of the issue, the first priority should be protection of the victims and their privacy. Establishing a commission of inquiry to investigate sexual violence in conflict countries, as recommended by the Secretary-General, is an interesting option.

However, we need to give careful consideration to the feasibility of the idea, and specifically to how information would be collected and shared and to whether the objective of data collection would be to facilitate the prosecution of perpetrators or simply to build a strong information resource.

The second challenge is ending impunity for those responsible for sexual violence in armed conflict and ensuring accountability. Both are essential, and we therefore strongly urge the Governments of countries in conflict to undertake comprehensive legal and judicial reforms. In this connection, we are encouraged to learn from the report that some progress has in fact

been made in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia and the Sudan towards improving legal mechanisms against sexual violence.

If we want these efforts to succeed, however, we must provide capacity-building assistance, such as training for judicial and law enforcement officials on international human rights and humanitarian law, as well as on the revision of national laws and improving the manner in which they are applied.

We expect that serious crimes, such as crimes against humanity, will be referred to the International Criminal Court (ICC). At the same time, bearing in mind that the ICC prosecutes only those who bear the greatest responsibility, the Security Council must consider feasible and appropriate alternative mechanisms for ensuring the accountability of all perpetrators of sexual violence in any conflict situation. We anticipate that the Secretary-General will include a proposal for such mechanisms in his follow-up report.

Thirdly, strengthening coordination within the United Nations system is essential to implementing resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008), as a number of United Nations agencies are engaged in combating sexual violence in armed conflict and post-conflict situations. We support the commitment that the Secretary-General makes in his report to strengthening coordination in the United Nations system so that there will be a coherent and comprehensive multisector response both at Headquarters and at the local level.

One useful coordination mechanism is United Nations Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict, which is expected to be utilized not only to promote the sharing of information and eliminate the duplication of work, but also to integrate the policies and programmes of the United Nations system as a whole, particularly in the field. In that context, we note that the Secretary-General is considering the appointment of a senior person to be responsible for coordinating the prevention of and response to sexual violence across the United Nations system.

Allow me to say just a few more words on the subject of human security in connection with the topic that we are now discussing. In order to respond effectively to the needs of women and girls who are victims of sexual violence, we must apply the concept of human security. Such a multisector approach focuses on both protection and empowerment at the individual and community levels. For that reason, at the sixth meeting of Friends of Human Security, held this past June and co-hosted by Japan and Mexico, the subject of sexual violence against women in armed conflict had a prominent place on the agenda.

For the same reason, through the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security, Japan has been providing support for projects that address the issue of violence against women and its root causes in a comprehensive and multisectoral manner in countries including the Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia and Burundi.

In 2010, we shall commemorate the tenth anniversary of the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security. As that observance draws near, we must redouble our efforts to produce concrete and tangible results on this important issue. The Security Council simply must strengthen its response to sexual violence in armed conflict. To that end, we request the Secretary-General to continue to submit regular reports on the progress that is being made in the implementation of resolution 1820 (2008), as it is a matter of great concern to all of us.

Mr. Dabbashi (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*spoke in Arabic*): I wish to join preceding speakers in thanking the Secretary-General for his report (S/2009/362) and for his presence at this meeting. I also welcome his personal commitment to combating the phenomenon of sexual violence in armed conflict.

Both resolution 1820 (2008) and resolution 1882 (2009) on children and armed conflict, which was adopted last week, represent important steps towards the development of a system of comprehensive practical measures to protect civilians, particularly women and children, in situations of armed conflict. All the resolutions that have been adopted in that regard contribute to ongoing efforts to establish and codify international humanitarian law, which must be implemented. Today's open debate on this issue will undoubtedly help to strengthen efforts and initiatives in this area, and we wish to commend the United Kingdom delegation for organizing it.

The changing and complex nature of armed conflict has caused great harm to large numbers of civilians, in particular the most vulnerable groups, girls and women, whom it has made more vulnerable to sexual violence. We agree with the Secretary-General that sexual violence dehumanizes its victims, inflicting

intense psychological and physical trauma, and is often accompanied by fear, shame and stigma, which usually cause victims not to report such crimes.

The widespread and systematic perpetration of sexual violence diminishes the prospects for early post-conflict recovery and peacebuilding, and usually unleashes a vicious circle of attacks and counterattacks. In our view, that justifies the great importance attached to continued efforts to develop practical mechanisms for preventing such heinous acts and violations against these vulnerable groups.

Here, we express our regret at the continued attacks on civilians in armed conflicts, including acts of sexual violence and violence based on ethnicity, gender or religion or aimed at achieving specific political goals. We strongly condemn such practices, which constitute clear violations of international humanitarian and human rights law.

Indeed, the relevant Security Council resolutions will be devoid of any value if they are not implemented in all conflict areas, including the occupied Palestinian territories and other occupied Arab territories, which have been subject for many decades to the systematic commission of violations and inhuman practices against civilians, including severe human rights violations against women and children.

We had hoped that the report now before the Council would address violence against women in general and refer to the blatant violations of international law being perpetrated in the occupied Palestinian territories, including starvation and denial of access to medical supplies, hospitals and clinics, as well as to the torture and harassment being endured by Palestinian women in Israeli prisons. Such practices constitute physical and psychological violence, and we ask that they be taken into consideration in future reports. The same applies to the violations that have been committed in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Some progress has undoubtedly been made in efforts to combat violence against women in conflict areas, particularly in Africa. However, we must continue to support Governments in protecting their citizens by helping them to formulate and implement comprehensive strategies to combat sexual violence, bearing in mind each country's specificities and particular needs. We agree with the Secretary-General that inadequate measures to prevent sexual violence, protect civilians, combat impunity for sexual violence and address continuing discrimination against women and girls, as well the failure of some parties to conflicts to honour their commitments, have contributed greatly to the exacerbation and spread of sexual violence.

Therefore, countries must make greater efforts to build their national capacities to combat this phenomenon. That, of course, will require the reform of judicial systems to bring them into conformity with recognized international norms. There is a need to ensure that the perpetrators and masterminds of sexual violence are denied any kind of amnesty or immunity in order to guarantee justice for the victims.

Furthermore, efforts must be made to raise social awareness of issues related to sexual violence and of the need to avoid marginalizing or stigmatizing its victims and to rehabilitate them. In this respect, I welcome the initiatives undertaken by various United Nations entities, including the Peacebuilding Commission and peacekeeping operations, in the areas of peace and security, human rights, humanitarian affairs and development, as well as efforts to provide strategic advice, raise awareness, promote institutional reforms, offer support and services to victims, and provide monitoring and protection. We hope that all those efforts will help put an end to sexual violence and impunity for such crimes. It is also necessary to increase women's participation in peacekeeping and peacebuilding operations.

We have taken note of the recommendations that the Secretary-General makes in his report. We agree with him that it is essential that all United Nations actors ensure full respect for ethical, humanitarian and safety standards for researching, measuring and collecting data on sexual violence. We endorse all of the report's recommendations.

We welcome the Secretary-General proposal for the establishment of an independent commission of inquiry to investigate sexual violence in certain conflict areas. We are ready to engage with other Council members in a positive discussion on that recommendation.

Mr. Mugoya (Uganda): I wish to thank the delegation of the United Kingdom for organizing today's debate on this very important subject. I wish also to welcome the Secretary-General and to thank him for the comprehensive report (S/2009/362) he has submitted on the implementation of resolution 1820 (2008).

At the outset, let me reiterate that Uganda deplores and condemns sexual violence and supports the various efforts by the United Nations and other stakeholders to eradicate its use as an instrument of war. Uganda has continued to advocate at the regional and international levels for respect for and protection in armed conflict of women and children who would otherwise be victims of sexual violence.

It is clear from the report of the Secretary-General that the incidence of widespread sexual violence tends to escalate in situations where State institutions have broken down. It is also clear that this is a global problem and that both Stat and non-State actors have been responsible for some of the very serious abuses that have taken place. Thus, sexual violence is a symptom of a much bigger problem, about which Uganda is greatly concerned.

There should be no impunity for perpetrators of sexual violence, and all efforts must be made to ensure that culprits are held accountable for their despicable actions. Only then can victims begin to heal and to develop a measure of confidence that they have not been abandoned altogether. There remains an urgent need to sensitize all parties to armed conflict to the fact that certain practices are not acceptable under any circumstances.

Effective implementation of resolution 1820 (2008) also requires that, at the very minimum, an atmosphere of peace, security and stability be in place. The most effective way to avoid sexual violence during armed conflict is to ensure that peace and the rule of law are restored in the affected countries. In order to address the situation more realistically and conclusively, institutions of the State have to be strengthened. When institutions of the State such as the police, prisons, governance and the army are well established, law enforcement can then be enhanced and severe penalties for perpetrators will become an actual deterrent. There are instances where perpetrators of sexual violence still live openly among their victims, with impunity.

Possible solutions to drawn-out conflicts need to be addressed in a holistic way. For instance, integrating the various forces in an armed conflict requires more than just a simple change of uniform. It requires a change in mindset, and it requires counselling, training and capacity-building. The integration of armed forces should be well structured. There should be strict vetting of recruits for the armed forces so that people who are at high risk of becoming sexual predators are excluded. High-ranking officers implicated in sexual violence should be removed from the ranks of armed personnel as an example to others and in order to send a clear message of zero tolerance for sexual violence.

It is incumbent upon the Council to ensure that resolutions to establish or renew mandates or to impose enforcement measures under Chapter VII of the Charter contain provisions, as appropriate, on the prevention of and response to sexual violence, with corresponding requirements on reporting to the Council. The United Nations, regional organizations and civil society need to work together to train good mediators, including female mediators, in adequate numbers and to mobilize sufficient resources to carry out these activities. Uganda supports the creation of an effective mechanism that will galvanize the various efforts to find a lasting solution to this problem.

In that regard, my delegation welcomes the establishment of United Nations Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict. Its existence is a first step towards improving the coordination of existing activities and the exchange of crucial information between United Nations Headquarters and country-level offices. We also welcome the Secretary-General's commitment to submit an annual report on implementation of resolution 1820 (2008).

Mr. Shcherbak (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The Russian delegation is grateful to the delegation of the United Kingdom for the timely initiative of convening this Security Council meeting on such an important issue. Our thanks go to the Secretary-General for his report (S/2009/362) on the implementation of resolution 1820 (2008) and for his briefing on the matter.

Like previous speakers, we believe that sexual violence, both during conflict and in peacetime, is a heinous crime that must be strenuously condemned and severely punished. Of particular concern are situations in which the phenomenon is widespread and systematic, which could be a matter of concern for the Security Council pursuant to paragraph 1 of resolution 1820 (2008). But it should not be forgotten that women and children continue to be victims of premeditated attacks, including acts of terrorism, the indiscriminate or excessive use of force and other acts.

In that connection, we support the Secretary-General's appeal to parties to conflict to comply strictly with international criminal law, humanitarian law and international human rights and refugee law. Violence takes many different forms, and we believe that due attention must be paid to all categories of violence. That conforms to the spirit of resolution 1325 (2000), which remains the primary point of reference for protecting women and guaranteeing their rights during conflict.

Such a balanced approach was reflected in resolution 1882 (2009), on children and armed conflict, which the Security Council adopted three days ago. In that resolution, the killing and maiming of children and sexual violence committed against them are highlighted as crimes requiring priority attention.

Against that background, a number of the Secretary-General's practical proposals on strengthening the efforts of the United Nations system to combat sexual violence are of interest. However, the question arises of whether, for example, it would be fair to establish a commission of inquiry or special Security Council mechanisms on the single issue of sexual violence. Is that not an excessively narrow way of looking at this issue? Should there not be a comprehensive and all-encompassing approach to the issue of violence and violations of the rights of civilians during armed conflict? Should we really turn a blind eye to other grievous crimes against civilians, including women and children? In that connection, the proposals of the Secretary-General merit careful study, perhaps in a broader context.

On the whole, such issues should be considered without isolating them from the entire range of problems of conflict settlement and gender equality. It should be recalled that an important precondition for overcoming violence against women is full participation by women themselves in peace processes and in post-conflict reconstruction. In such processes there must be more consistent implementation of the provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and other specialized human rights instruments.

The Russian Federation is confident that through joint efforts we cannot only reduce the incidence of sexual violence during conflict but also make significant progress towards gender equality and the advancement of women, in the spirit of the decisions taken at the fourth World Conference on Women and the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly.

Mr. Heller (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): I welcome the initiative of your delegation, Mr. President, to hold this open debate on the topic of women and peace and security. I also thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for introducing his report (S/2009/362) pursuant to resolution 1820 (2008) and for his presence here today.

The Secretary-General points out in his report that, with regard to sexual violence in conflicts and post-conflict situations, "the majority of past abuses remain to be accounted for" (*S/2009/362, para. 9*). That is why passivity before this scourge is not an option. The lack of action would send the wrong message that sexual violence is permissible. The international community, and the Security Council in particular, must act and show unequivocally that acts of sexual violence will not remain unpunished.

My delegation reiterates the call on Member States that have experienced cases of sexual violence in conflict or post-conflict situations to investigate these crimes and to launch judicial proceedings against those allegedly responsible for these crimes. The brutality of sexual violence in some conflicts is alarming. In the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, there have been at least 200,000 cases since 1996, while today we are even seeing a trend towards the use of sexual violence against men. We acknowledge the decision of President Kabila to implement a zero-tolerance policy with respect to the use of sexual violence by the Congolese Armed Forces, and we will follow attentively the trials of five high-ranking army officers who allegedly committed serious human rights violations, including crimes involving sexual violence.

Mexico once again reiterates the importance of the International Criminal Court in prosecuting, when appropriate, those responsible for certain acts of sexual violence that, in accordance with the Rome Statute, constitute war crimes and crimes against humanity, for which there is no room for consideration of rank or privilege.

The recent adoption of resolution 1882 (2009), although it refers to children, represents a significant step towards tackling sexual violence, since it broadens the criteria for including, in the annexes to the Secretary-General's reports, parties to armed conflicts who, in violation of relevant international law, commit acts that cause the deaths and mutilation of children, rape and other forms of sexual violence. The resolution also calls for improved communication between the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict and the sanctions committees of the Security Council through an exchange of information on violations and abuses committed against children.

The Secretary-General's report clearly illustrates the complexity of the task of collecting information on sexual violence, given its inhuman nature, the psychological and physical trauma that it inflicts, and the fear, shame and stigma that it entails for its victims. That is why my Government welcomes the recommendation to establish a commission to investigate violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law and to report on these violations, focusing in particular on cases of sexual violence in the situations in Chad, Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Sudan. We also welcome the possibility of establishing such commissions for other conflicts in which sexual violence is perpetrated. The commission of enquiry should also identify those responsible for crimes of sexual violence and report on the measures that States and other parties to the conflict may take or fail to take. Such information will be extremely useful to the work of the various sanctions committees.

My delegation also takes note of the other recommendations of the Secretary-General, and agrees that Security Council resolutions establishing or renewing mandates or imposing measures under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter must include provisions to prevent and, most importantly, to respond to sexual violence, and on the obligation to report the Council.

With respect to the possibility of appointing a senior person with responsibility to attend to the prevention and response to sexual violence across the United Nations system, Mexico believes that a very careful consideration of the matter will be necessary, in particular with regard to whether this option would truly be the best response the United Nations system could provide in addressing the scourge of sexual violence.

We welcome the actions of the Secretary-General to strengthen coordination within the United Nations system in order to work jointly to prevent and respond to sexual violence, and we invite him to continue to update this coordination, in particular among the teams on the ground, since that is where the victims of sexual violence are to be found.

With respect to political leadership, Mexico supports the Secretary-General's request for high-level officials of the Secretariat and the heads of the relevant organizations, funds and programmes to play a greater role in raising awareness on sexual violence. The United Nations response to this scourge must be multisectoral, organized and coherent. We need a thorough analysis of the work undertaken by the various agencies and United Nations teams in this area, with a view to avoiding duplication of efforts and to promoting a more effective exchange of information. This would require a major but justified effort to address sexual violence.

Finally, I would like to stress the need for a full implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) and the importance of incorporating the gender perspective in efforts to deal with situations of armed conflict. Women's participation in police and armed forces and peacekeeping operations must be a priority in conflict situations where there is sexual violence in order to contribute to its eradication. Similarly, the inclusion of women in mediation processes is crucial to guaranteeing lasting peace.

Mr. Bui The Giang (Viet Nam): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this open debate on the first report of the Secretary-General (S/2009/362) on the implementation of resolution 1820 (2008). I am also thankful to the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report and his highly focused briefing today.

More than a year ago, following the Security Council's open debate on widespread and systematic rape and other forms of sexual violence against women and girls in armed conflict, this Council adopted resolution 1820 (2008), leading to visibly improved awareness of sexual violence across the United Nations system, the international community and many conflict areas. Since then, sexual violence has been dealt with in many reports of the Secretary-General and outcome

documents of the Security Council, as well as many other United Nations forums.

The adoption of resolution 1882 (2009) on children and armed conflict early this week, with criteria expanded to include in the annex lists of the Secretary-General's reports parties that engage in patterns of killing, maiming and sexual violence against children, once again reaffirmed the Council's resolve to halt those violations.

Given the increasing sexual abuse and violence in many parts of the world, which we categorically condemn, Viet Nam supports efforts to fully translate into practice the 2007 United Nations Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict initiative and other measures aimed at preventing and responding to sexual violence in armed conflict in the areas of humanitarian assistance, awareness-raising, advocacy, capacity-building and training, legal, judicial and institutional reforms, and the provision of services to victims, and so on. We support the ongoing efforts of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the United Nations Development Fund for Women and other agencies to integrate sexual violence into protection of civilians mandates and to develop important materials, such as gender guidelines for military personnel in peacekeeping operations and the *Analytical Inventory of Responses by Peacekeeping Personnel to War-Related Violence against Women*.

Much remains to be done in the struggle against sexual violence in armed conflict. Greater efforts should be made to promote the empowerment of women and to improve women's participation in the early stages of peace processes, particularly in conflict resolution and peacebuilding. Along that line, we support a more proactive engagement of the United Nations in increasing women's participation in peace negotiations, as well as in political and peacekeeping missions, as an effective way to better support women and girl victims on the ground, while helping to foster women's empowerment in societies emerging from conflict.

Measures to protect women and girls from sexual violence in conflict situations should be designed and implemented as part of a broader strategic framework that covers social, economic and development issues. As such, one of the best ways to prevent and respond to sexual violence is to further mainstream gender in early recovery planning and financing at the national level. The United Nations, particularly the Peacebuilding Commission, the United Nations Development Programme and donors, should further assist national Governments in building gender-related capacity and developing gender-sensitive programmes to help survivors of sexual violence with a wide range of services — from access to justice, relief from stigma and ostracism, and provision of mental and psychological health care to support for greater physical, economic and social security through employment and income generation, and involvement in decision-making.

Underlining the high importance of international assistance and cooperation, we remain of the view that States bear the primary responsibility to protect their populations from all types of violations, including sexual violence. At the same time, my delegation believes that, in order to ensure the best possible cost-effective performance of the whole system, it is imperative to promote more efficient use and better coordination of existing mechanisms and structures, while giving initiatives on creating new ones serious and comprehensive consideration.

Finally, members may rest assured of Viet Nam's resolute determination to work constructively, together with all international partners, towards the strict implementation of all relevant international laws and Security Council resolutions, most directly resolution 1820 (2008), to put an end to sexual violence and to ensure a worthy place for women and girls in the life of humanity.

Mr. Vilović (Croatia): At the outset, I wish to thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this debate, under the United Kingdom presidency, on women, peace and security, with a focus on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1820 (2008). Croatia aligns itself with the statement to be delivered later on behalf of the European Union.

We also express our deep appreciation to the Secretary-General for his first progress report pursuant to that resolution (S/2009/362). We view it as an important initial road map for our future work on that issue. We further perceive the Secretary-General's leadership on that issue as vital to ensure that political momentum is further galvanized on behalf of resolution 1820 (2008), with a view to urgently addressing outstanding key challenges that continue to

hinder progress in combating sexual violence in conflict-affected situations.

The adoption of resolution 1820 (2008) represented a significant follow-up to the Council's landmark resolution 1325 (2000). Under resolution 1820 (2008), we expressed our political will to further advance efforts to prevent and respond to the use of sexual violence in conflict-related situations. Croatia was an ardent supporter of resolution 1820 (2008) from its conceptual phase to its ultimate adoption, and we continue to reiterate our full support for the resolution's unequivocal implementation. In that respect, we reiterate our call on all parties to armed conflict to strictly adhere to relevant international law.

Despite the wide-scale support shown for resolution 1820 (2008) last year, the Secretary-General's report serves as an important reminder that its overall implementation remains weak and that the deliberate and targeted use of sexual violence against women and girls in conflict-affected situations continues to be a key challenge of our time. Furthermore, in certain parts of the world, such as the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, widespread and systematic sexual violations are being perpetrated systematically and at levels of such brutality that they defy belief. Also disturbing to us is the increasing trend of unrestrained accompanying violations against victims, such as their abduction, enforced prostitution and enslavement.

Croatia, too, bears its own painful reminders that sexual violence in conflict-related situations is not a relic of the distant past. Indeed, as the Secretary-General points out in his report, we, too, experienced first-hand the infliction of widespread and systematic rape and sexual violence as a tactic of war to terrorize and displace civilian populations in the 1990s. In that respect, the particularity of the conflict in our region is partially evidenced in the case law of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia. Croatia therefore supports the systematic referral of serious crimes, such as crimes against humanity, to the International Criminal Court.

As part of our deliberations today, aimed at strengthening the implementation of resolution 1820 (2008), we view the report of the Secretary-General as having raised some significant implications for our future work. It highlights important hurdles and gaps that are keeping effective protection elusive and preventing genuine change on the ground. In that respect, we appreciate the Secretary-General's candour as to the limitations of certain aspects of his report, especially with regard to his specific concerns regarding the collection of information on sexual violence, as requested under resolution 1820 (2008).

Today's debate, and any possible future outcome, will serve as an important litmus test as to the level of our political determination to strengthen existing efforts, including the elimination of prevailing impunity in many conflict-affected situations.

The Secretary-General, in pointing to the urgency and magnitude of the problem, has correctly underscored the need for a mutually reinforcing multisectoral response by the United Nations system that must address this problem decisively in order to ensure more effective protection and assistance for victims. Here, the Security Council has an important role to play. While we welcome measures already taken to date by the United Nations towards the implementation of resolution 1820 (2008), we see the need for a wider focus within the Council's own agenda on issues related to the resolution than has so far been the case.

Furthermore, the establishment of a regular reporting cycle by the Secretary-General on resolution 1820 (2008) will be crucial to that process. Improving the added value of such inputs will require the further development of United Nations capacities in the strategic collection and analysis of violations against women and girls in conflict situations. Calls for the establishment of a commission of inquiry, as outlined in the report, warrant our serious consideration.

The monitoring of sexual violence can be further strengthened by closer synergies with other existing monitoring mechanisms. In this context, Croatia strongly welcomes the adoption this week of resolution 1882 (2009), on children and armed conflict, expanding the monitoring and reporting mechanism trigger to include rape and other forms of sexual violence. This will not only serve as an important milestone for the children-and-armed-conflict agenda, but also as a valuable complementary mechanism for monitoring implementation of resolution 1820 (2008), especially for young women up to the age of 18.

Croatia also believes that the revised aide-mémoire (S/PRST/2009/1, annex) adopted in January on the protection of civilians, including women and

girls, affected by armed conflict will also facilitate our future efforts towards achieving effective implementation of resolution 1820 (2008).

We also join others who call for more to be done at the field operation level to fill existing gaps, especially through better integration of the gender perspective in the peacekeeping, peacebuilding and humanitarian arenas to strengthen mandates for the protection of women. We continue to urge strengthened female leadership in the field, with more female engagement at all levels. Furthermore, gender equality and respect for women's human rights must be at the centre of all United Nations missions, with strict adherence to the Organization's zero-tolerance policy on sexual violence.

While Croatia will be looking to the United Nations system to step up its efforts to implement the relevant recommendations in the report, Member States will also have to do their part. More needs to be done to ensure full implementation of Member States' commitments pursuant to resolutions 1820 (2008) and 1325 (2000).

Functioning national legal institutions need to be established, underpinned by a strong normative framework ensuring full gender equality and inclusiveness, as well as endorsing women's political, economic and human rights, in line with the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which marks its thirtieth anniversary this year. Of paramount importance is the elimination of existing climates of impunity by enabling the rule of law to prevail. Together, all of these elements will serve as strong deterrents for future perpetrators.

Greater cooperation between the United Nations and regional mechanisms can be further built upon to support national efforts in this respect. Drawing on previous peacebuilding experience and increasing the number of deployable civilian experts, particularly from affected regions and who possess the relevant gender-perspective expertise and appropriate training, could significantly contribute to overall efforts. Furthermore, we must not overlook the value of the capacity of local women to play a role as powerful advocates for protection by changing attitudes on the ground.

For hundreds of thousands of women and girls worldwide, time is of the essence. Now is not the time for us to be complacent in our efforts. Croatia hopes that today's debate will pave the way for further timely and concrete measures aimed at bringing about effective implementation of the 1820 agenda, with the ultimate aim of ending sexual violence in conflict-affected and related situations.

Mr. Urbina (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): It is an honour for Costa Rica to speak today in its capacity as Chair of the Human Security Network, consisting of the following countries: Austria, Canada, Chile, Costa Rica, Greece, Ireland, Jordan, Mali, Norway, Slovenia, Switzerland and Thailand, and South Africa as an observer.

To begin, I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for having convened this important debate. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his presentation. We welcome the submission of his report (S/2009/362), which contains valuable recommendations on combating sexual violence.

In the past 10 years, the Security Council has increasingly considered security issues with a gender-equality perspective and has enshrined its commitment in resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008). Those resolutions place women at the centre of consideration of security issues, recognizing them not merely as victims but also as important actors in building sustainable peace and security and in fostering development in societies experiencing or emerging from armed conflict. Furthermore, resolution 1612 (2005) and the recently adopted resolution 1882 (2009), both on children and armed conflict, along with resolution 1674 (2006), on the protection of civilians in armed conflict, strengthen and expand the Security Council protection framework in the area of sexual violence.

We commend the progress the Security Council has made in thematic discussions on this issue and the positive developments stemming from it. We also welcome the active interest and the commitment on gender-related issues seen in the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, the Human Rights Council, the United Nations funds and programmes and the relevant human-rights treaty bodies, especially the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

Unfortunately, progress towards implementation of cross-cutting gender commitments, with regard to

curbing, punishing and protecting against sexual violence in armed conflict situations, has been slow and uneven. This is the result of a number of factors, including weak coordination and fragmented responses within the United Nations system, insufficient funding and human resources, inefficient accountability measures and a lack of firm political will. The Secretary-General's report highlights the challenges posed by inadequate preventive measures, the failure to end impunity and persistent discrimination against women and girls in law and in practice, and the insufficient and inadequate access to assistance and treatment for victims.

In the light of those challenges, we believe that a more comprehensive and strategic approach is needed, focused on six critical areas: prevention, protection, women's participation, accountability, assistance to victims and data collection.

The first area is prevention, which is essential in combating sexual violence and which must be tailored to the specific circumstances of each situation. Gender-based violence, discrimination and inequality contribute to exacerbating sexual violence when the rule of law breaks down. Efforts must be made to eliminate prejudice, discriminatory social patterns, historically rooted inequalities and harmful traditional and cultural practices that condone sexual violence. In addition, these measures should be aimed at raising community awareness and eliciting more direct engagement by traditional and religious leaders.

The second focus is on the need to strengthen the protection capacity not only of States but also of United Nations personnel on the ground. Security sector reform and the rule of law can play a vital role in this process. International cooperation should increase resources to improve policing and civilian capacities, as well as providing technical assistance and mentoring to help train military, police and other security forces to deal with cases of sexual violence. Without question, this can result in an increased awareness of human-rights standards and obligations under international law.

In dealing with peacekeeping operations and protection mandates, we need to develop clear gender-sensitive operational guidelines in order to effectively tackle sexual violence. Enhanced coordination, integrated strategic frameworks and united priorities among the various United Nations actors on the ground are fundamental to producing a more effective response to this problem. Such a response, combined with the contributions of the Peacebuilding Commission, would, we believe, result in a more strategic approach and more effective engagement.

The third area concerns participation. Despite the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000) nine years ago, the participation of women in peacekeeping and peacebuilding remains minimal. As reaffirmed in resolution 1820 (2008), we must continue to strive to encourage the empowerment of women and their systematic and effective participation at all levels in peacekeeping and political missions. We should also increase the number of female heads of mission, military observers, civilian police and United Nations mediators. Women also have a critical role to play in the long-term prevention of conflicts. At the same time, we must also study and understand the obstacles to promoting women's participation in these fields if we are to reverse that trend.

The fourth area of interest is accountability, which, through justice, fosters the promotion and sustainability of peace. In this regard, we consider that amnesties should exclude crimes of sexual violence. All parties, State and non-State, must always refrain from committing and tolerating sexual violence. All necessary steps should be taken to protect individuals, punish perpetrators and provide remedy to victims. Zero-tolerance policies and the principle of command responsibility are also important measures to enforce accountability.

In this context, the genuine commitment of civilian and military leaders is important to reducing sexual violence. International cooperation must support efforts to hold perpetrators accountable and to ensure equal and effective access to justice under internationally agreed standards. The complementary role of international justice mechanisms, such as the International Criminal Court, inter alia, can also play a relevant role in supporting national efforts to fight impunity, as appropriate.

The Security Council has recognized that sexual violence in situations of armed conflict may, under some circumstances, constitute a threat to international peace and security. Therefore, we believe that the Security Council should include gender equality concerns as well as provisions to prevent and respond to sexual violence when establishing or renewing

peacekeeping mandates. The Security Council should consider targeted and effective means to ensure compliance. In addition, the Council should improve the communication and exchange of information among its subsidiary bodies in order to ensure a more coherent approach to combating sexual violence.

The fifth area that deserves our attention is assistance to victims. In addition to the aforementioned measures, there must be a multisectoral approach to the assistance and social protection of victims, in particular to ensure their access to medical care, psychological and psycho-social support, legal assistance, education and sustainable socio-economic reintegration. Assistance measures must focus on avoiding the marginalization and stigmatization of victims, and facilitate victims' social reintegration to prevent further trauma. Initiatives such as the United Nations Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict should be complemented by efforts to address the root causes of violence. In the case of refugees and displaced persons, the special needs of women and girls, including medical care during repatriation and resettlement, should also be taken into account.

Lastly, timely, objective, accurate and reliable data collection is important to enhancing our understanding of the various forms of sexual violence in armed conflict situations and their aftermath so as to ensure the appropriate responses and to move forward in the implementation of resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008).

We also encourage donors, researchers and others to support ethical investigation and data collection efforts in post-conflict settings that improve our ability to prevent and respond to this problem. Furthermore, in collecting data, it is important to ensure the disaggregation by age and sex of victims and perpetrators alike in order to target prevention and response activities.

We need to improve the effectiveness of monitoring and reporting to facilitate strategic planning and assessment of progress. We will revisit this important matter once the Secretary-General submits the recommendations in his next report.

Mr. Liu Zhenmin (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I wish to thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his presence and his statement. I also thank him for his report (S/2009/362), submitted pursuant to resolution 1820 (2008). We also welcome the presence of the Deputy Secretary-General at this meeting.

Ten years ago, the Security Council adopted resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security. In June last year, the Security Council adopted resolution 1820 (2008) on combating sexual violence. The two resolutions laid the foundation for the Security Council's response to questions relating to women in the field of peace and security. In recent years, with the joint efforts of the United Nations, Member States, regional organizations and civil society, concepts such as gender equality, the empowerment of women and the prevention of and fight against sexual violence have steadily gained ground, and work in these areas has made remarkable progress.

However, the cruel reality is that women remain the primary victims in many current conflicts, and sexual violence against women remains a big problem. The international community still has a lot of work to do in protecting women and defending their rights and interests. China condemns all acts of violence against women in armed conflict, including sexual violence. We urge parties to conflicts to comply with international humanitarian and human rights law. We call on the Governments of countries concerned to investigate and bring to justice the perpetrators of crimes against women in armed conflicts. We urge the parties that have not done so to accede to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women as soon as possible.

We join the Secretary-General in endorsing a policy of zero tolerance for acts of sexual exploitation committed by peacekeeping personnel in the hope that troop-contributing countries will strengthen the training and supervision of such personnel and their accountability in this regard, in order to ensure that the relevant United Nations code of conduct will be effectively observed.

I would like to make a few comments on the work under way to strengthen the protection of women in armed conflict. First, the Security Council can play a unique role, and the relevant bodies of the United Nations should perform their respective functions and strengthen coordination and cooperation. In his report, the Secretary-General analyses many characteristics of the question of sexual violence, the most salient of which is its close connection to armed conflict. As the primary organ responsible for maintaining international

peace and security, the Security Council should address this issue in the context of relevant political situations and peace processes, focusing on effective conflict prevention, the maintenance of peace and post-conflict reconstruction, so as to create a political, security and legal environment conducive to alleviating and eliminating sexual violence.

The General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, the Human Rights Council, the Secretariat and the relevant treaty bodies should play their due roles by focusing on aspects within the purview of their respective functions. The Security Council should strengthen communication and cooperation with the aforementioned bodies to create synergy when addressing this issue. We are not in favour of the Security Council's all-too-frequent use of sanctions or the threat of sanctions. The Council should exercise caution in applying sanctions in the context of fighting sexual violence.

Secondly, at all stages of peace processes, greater attention should be paid to the status and role of women, and efforts made to raise awareness of women's issues and to nurture a culture of greater respect for women. It is necessary to place great value on women's special needs and concerns in the areas of conflict prevention, peacekeeping and peacebuilding in order to enable them to fully enjoy their rights to participate and make decisions in peace processes and to create a favourable environment for women's lives and development. All that will contribute to fundamentally changing the vulnerable condition of women and effectively safeguard their rights and interests.

Thirdly, Governments bear the primary responsibility for protecting the women of their respective countries. The international community should offer constructive assistance. The responsibility for implementing relevant Security Council resolutions on the protection of women rests primarily with Governments. Situations vary from country to country, and the international community should respect the Governments of the countries concerned in formulating and implementing measures in the light of those countries' specific circumstances so as to ensure full national ownership.

It should be stressed that whether a country is in the midst of or emerging from conflict, it is often faced with a number of challenges. The international community should support countries' capacity-building efforts on the basis of the principles of the United Nations Charter and in respect for their desires.

Fourthly, efforts to encourage and support the participation of civil society in protecting women should be pursued. Many male and female staff members of non-governmental organizations are working hard, in difficult circumstances on the ground, to protect the rights and interests of women. Their work deserves our appreciation. China supports their ongoing constructive role in protecting women in armed conflict and encourages them to remain in contact with relevant United Nations entities and agencies, especially those directly involved in women's issues, and to submit appropriate proposals.

We note the Secretary-General's proposal for the establishment of a commission of inquiry to investigate sexual violence in the Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Chad and to make recommendations to the Security Council on effective ways to fight impunity. We suggest that the Secretary-General communicate and coordinate extensively with the countries concerned with respect to the issues and that it seek their prior consent. At the same time, in addressing issues related to sexual violence, we must distinguish acts committed by Governments from those committed by rebel groups. We urge all parties concerned to address every aspect of violence against women in armed conflict in a comprehensive and balanced manner.

In addressing the issue of women and peace and security, the Security Council should not only regard women as the victims of armed conflict, but also consider the important role they can play in the peace process. In October 2008, under China's presidency, the Security Council held a serious debate on the role of women in the peace process (see S/PV.6005) and achieved desirable results. We hope that the Council will continue to attach importance to this issue in the future.

The Chinese Government has always attached great importance to protecting the rights and interests of women and to advancing their status. We will continue to work with the international community to further combat sexual violence, enhance the status of women in the peace processes of countries concerned, and meet all our goals in the field of women and peace and security.

Mr. Tiendrébéogo (Burkina Faso) (*spoke in French*): We thank you, Sir, for organizing today's debate on such an important issue. We also thank the Secretary-General for introducing his first report (S/2009/362) pursuant to resolution 1820 (2008), and welcome the relevant analyses and recommendations it contains.

Sexual violence is among the most heinous crimes committed in armed conflict and has become a veritable weapon of war, in which women and girls pay a very heavy price. Several initiatives have been undertaken to put a halt to this phenomenon, including the adoption of resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008), whereby the Security Council took an important step in its efforts to combat sexual violence in armed conflict. Unfortunately, it must be noted that such acts continue, in flagrant violation of the fundamental principles of human rights, international humanitarian law and relevant resolutions of the Security Council.

Sexual violence is committed deliberately, in various ways and to different ends by all categories of parties to conflicts, including members of armed forces and State police, despite the fact that the latter's primary duty is to protect the civilian population. In addition to its direct physical and psychological impact on victims and their families, such violence goes hand in hand with insecurity and with restrictions on the enjoyment of human rights and victims' full participation in conflict settlement and reconstruction. Unfortunately, social and cultural factors remain obstacles to assessing the extent and gravity of the phenomenon and its consequences, and they must be addressed.

The responsibility for eradicating this scourge and protecting its victims belongs primarily to States and all the parties to a conflict. From preventive measures to punishment to the ratification of relevant international instruments, every means are available to States to act effectively. It is important in particular to create a sustainable security environment and to establish independent and accessible justice systems capable of repairing the damage and combating impunity. Medical, psychological and economic care is also essential to victims.

Unfortunately, and in spite of everything, no form of reparation or treatment, howsoever effective, can permanently erase the scars borne by victims and their loved ones. It is therefore necessary to focus our efforts on prevention, strengthening the rule of law, respect for human rights, good governance and, where appropriate, reform of the security and justice sectors.

My delegation welcomes United Nations activities on this issue, in particular the Secretary-General's global awareness-raising campaign. The gravity of the situation requires a comprehensive and sustainable response through a common strategy. The United Nations should continue to build its capacity for action and coordination in order to better assist actors in the field, with the involvement at all levels of all members of the United Nations family. The appointment of a senior official on this issue would help the process, and we also take note of other initiatives of the Secretary-General to strengthen the contribution of the United Nations system.

With respect to peacekeeping operations, it is essential to design and implement an appropriate training programme on international humanitarian law, human rights, international criminal law and relevant resolutions of the Security Council. Moreover, the effectiveness of a policy of zero tolerance, the integration of women into the staff of peacekeeping operations, and the identification of measures to prevent sexual violence in resolutions establishing or renewing peacekeeping mandates should remain among our priorities. These are the challenges that Member States, troop-contributing countries and the Security Council should take up.

Sexual violence is a pernicious evil that has a deep impact on the enduring restoration of stability and peace. It is therefore essential that peace agreements take sexual violence into account, in particular in the course of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes and security sector reform. We welcome the concerted activities of the United Nations to integrate concerns about sexual violence into mediation processes and to increase the number of women mediators, who undoubtedly add value to peace and ceasefire agreements.

For all these reasons, my delegation welcomes the convening in June, under the auspices of the United Nations Development Fund for Women, of a colloquium on the theme "Conflict Related Sexual Violence in Peace Negotiations: Implementing Security Council Resolution 1820 (2008)". Its conclusions represent important options for consideration.

The Security Council has an important role to play in this collective effort, as it demonstrated yet again this week with its adoption of resolution 1882 (2009), extending the criteria for triggering the reporting and monitoring mechanism to include sexual violence against children. Moreover, the Council should establish a participatory process for collecting information in order to better gauge the scale and consequences of the phenomenon.

The challenges to be faced before the scourge of sexual violence in conflict zones can be definitively eradicated are still numerous. Mobilization for the full implementation of resolution 1820 (2008) must therefore remain strong at all levels.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of the United Kingdom.

We welcome the Secretary-General's contribution to our debate today and the continuing presence of the Deputy Secretary-General this morning. The Secretary-General's report (S/2009/362) highlights the challenges that we face in coming to grips with the issue of sexual violence in conflict zones, and it confirms and clarifies much of what we suspected about the extent of the problem. If we are serious about preventing and resolving conflict, then we need to be serious about addressing conflict-related sexual violence.

There is no shortage of will to take forward the Council's work in this area, as Tuesday's adoption of resolution 1882 (2009) on children and armed conflict showed. There are still gaps that we need to bridge in information, capacity, coordination and imagination, and the Secretary-General's report draws these out clearly.

The proliferation of sexual violence against women and girls is in part aimed at marginalizing their contribution to society. It deliberately degrades the role that they can play in restoring the fabric of peaceful communities. The Arria formula meeting that the United Kingdom hosted in June highlighted the critical importance of enhancing women's contribution to peace processes.

Short-term measures to improve protection and enhance women's participation in decision-making have to be accompanied by longer-term efforts to establish accountability and the rule of law. More effective monitoring of patterns of sexual violence in situations of armed conflict should allow the Council to identify and mandate the action necessary to prevent it.

We therefore welcome further reports from the Secretary-General. We support his recommendation that better use be made of commissions of inquiry, and the Council should ensure that conflict-related sexual violence gets the attention it deserves in the informal Expert Group on the Protection of Civilians and in the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict.

Let me add on a personal note that I share completely Ambassador Rice's conviction that the time to act is now. For those of us who took part in the Security Council mission in May, it was impossible not to be moved and angered by what we saw and heard. The perpetrators of these appalling crimes want to diminish women and exclude them from their role in building peace. If I took any encouragement from our meetings with those who have suffered, it was from their determination not to just remain victims, but to play their full part in finding and securing a lasting peace in which their rights will be respected and their security assured. That is what we must support – the courage and determination of women who want to make their unique contribution to peace.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I now give the floor to the representative of Norway.

Mr. Wetland (Norway): Last week, CNN ran a story of an 8-year old Liberian girl who had been gang-raped by four boys. This happened here in the United States, in Arizona, and thus aroused reaction and became global news. However, when such atrocities happen in conflict-ridden parts of Africa and elsewhere, apathy and indifference are all too prevalent.

Daily, there is violence, molesting and suffering. Lives are ruined. We hear about villages where every single female is raped and where a girl's capacity to have children is taken away from her while she is still a child herself. We see the destruction of families and entire communities.

With the adoption of resolution 1820 (2008), building on resolution 1325 (2000) and this week supplemented by resolution 1882 (2009), we now have

a comprehensive set of norms addressing these gruesome realities.

We welcome the Secretary-General's report (S/2009/362), with its comprehensive and direct policy recommendations. In today's meeting, I would like to make the following points on what we believe, in particular, needs to be done.

First, impunity must end. Rapists and perpetrators of sexual violence must be held accountable, tried and convicted, irrespective of rank or status, by they soldier or civilian. The responsibility lies with Governments and military leaders who too often have turned a blind eye to this.

The report rightly calls for comprehensive legal and judicial reform, in conformity with international standards, without delay and with a view to bringing perpetrators to justice and to ensuring that victims are treated with dignity throughout the judicial process and that they are protected and receive remedy.

Second, while collecting evidence is difficult, it must be given the highest priority, and reporting methods must be improved. Unimpeded access to humanitarian assistance for victims of violence would help, as would security sector reform whereby the number of trained women police officers should be increased. We thus share the Secretary-General's call for increased funding to enable humanitarian programmes to prevent and respond to sexual violence. We appreciate the assurance that United Nations-managed funds will pilot a system to allow decision-makers to track gender-related actions.

Third, victims should be given better medical and psycho-social assistance. They should be ensured socio-economic rehabilitation and empowerment, as well as economic compensation and support when taking their cases to court. We would support a proposal to establish a fund to address these issues.

Fourth, expertise and capacity to address sexual violence in the field must be strengthened through systematic training of personnel.

Fifth, while United Nations organizations make important contributions to all these ends — and we commend the work done by United Nations Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict and the Gender Standby Capacity project in this regard — we clearly see the need for stronger and more proactive ownership of this issue in the leadership of United Nations organizations and departments to ensure coordinated action, not least at field level.

We therefore support the appointment of a special representative of the Secretary-General on women, peace and security to provide a strong and visible hand in the United Nations to drive and coordinate system-wide prevention of and response to sexual violence in conflict and to front the broader agenda of women's equal participation at all levels of peacebuilding and conflict resolution.

Sixth, we would welcome the establishment of a commission of inquiry to investigate and report on violations of international humanitarian and human rights law, with a particular focus on Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Sudan. The commission would present recommendations to the Security Council on the need for improved or new mechanisms to ensure maximum accountability.

Seventh, we support the establishment of a mechanism of the Security Council to monitor how parties to armed conflict comply with obligations under international law, including addressing rape and other forms of sexual violence.

Lastly, resolution 1882 (2009) on children and armed conflict highlights and condemns rape and other forms of sexual violence against children. The possibility of listing the parties in conflict that commit rape and other forms of sexual violence against children is the right step to take, but if it is to fulfil its mandate, the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict will need increased support and resources.

Before closing, let me underscore that the challenges presented by the issues of women, peace and security and of the fight against sexual violence in armed conflict are among my Government's highest priorities. Our policy benefits greatly from the valuable input of humanitarian and civil society organizations, which often provide the most relevant experience and policy recommendations.

Sexual violence in situations of armed conflict is also a political and security question. It requires a political and security response. Members of the Security Council should therefore make sure that the issue remains prominent on the Council's agenda, and Norway would welcome a resolution to this effect. We look forward to the Secretary-General's annual

reporting on the implementation of resolution 1820 (2008).

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Sweden.

Mr. Lidén (Sweden): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Albania, Montenegro, Ukraine, Moldova, Armenia and Georgia align themselves with this statement.

One year ago the Security Council, in adopting resolution 1820 (2008), recognized that conflict-related sexual violence can constitute a threat to international peace and security. Resolution 1820 (2008) is a landmark resolution and a vital complement to resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security. The European Union views its effective implementation as pivotal.

Allow me to start by saying that the European Union commends the Secretary-General for his report on this urgent and important subject (S/2009/362). We encourage the Secretary-General to report annually to the Security Council on developments concerning the implementation of resolution 1820 (2008).

The General Assembly has recognized that sexual violence is a well-established method of torture and warfare. It is deeply dehumanizing and must be addressed at all levels, locally and internationally. The European Union condemns sexual violence in all its forms, including its use as a tool to advance political and military objectives. We call on leaders of all countries and organizations to take firm action to combat sexual violence.

The issue of conflict-related sexual violence has to be dealt with in a coordinated manner by the United Nations system. All branches of the United Nations should come together behind the vision that resolution 1820 (2008) proposed and that the Secretary-General's report echoes. Gaps in efforts need to be identified and addressed, and accountability must be established. The United Nations needs to develop a better capacity to gather information about cases of sexual violence and to address the needs of the victims.

The European Union takes note of the idea of appointing a senior representative with responsibility to integrate the United Nations response to conflict-related sexual violence. We would also welcome a follow-up mechanism on sexual violence, and we express our support for all efforts to create synergies among resolutions 1325 (2000), 1820 (2008) and 1612 (2005).

We need to improve the way in which we integrate women and gender aspects into broader humanitarian and peacemaking strategies. Women must be represented at every stage and level of peace negotiations. Civil society actors involved in women's issues should be consulted throughout those processes.

Peacekeeping missions can do more to address conflict-related sexual violence by supporting national efforts and by preparing themselves for the task in advance. Issues of sexual violence, gender equality and respect for human rights must be an integral part of the concept of operations for peacekeeping missions, including the predeployment training of peacekeepers.

There should be no alternative to a policy of zero tolerance on this issue. The sexual crimes currently being committed by parties in such situations as the conflicts in Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Sudan are unacceptable. Sexual crimes committed by military personnel should fall under the jurisdiction of civilian courts.

Short-term measures to improve protection must be accompanied by long-term efforts to establish the rule of law. We must ensure that respect for human rights and gender justice is reflected in national legislation and upheld in practice. Much more can be done to ensure the effective implementation of Member States' commitments on this issue. Impunity for atrocities against civilian populations must end. Institutions must be built to bring perpetrators to justice and address discrimination against women and children. The European Union supports the development of a comprehensive United Nations strategy to combat impunity for sexual violence.

The European Union will continue to implement resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008) by mainstreaming a gender-sensitive approach in all its policies and activities, especially those relating to crisis management and long-term development cooperation, and through targeted measures to protect and support women and children.

At a more general level, the European Union will integrate issues related to women and peace and security into its development strategies and its dialogue with partnership countries. A strong focus will be

placed on the rule of law and the responsibility to build effective, gender-sensitive justice systems. Such systems should aim to deliver justice to victims of sexual violence and help bring an end to impunity.

The Security Council and the General Assembly have recognized the destabilizing and dehumanizing effects of sexual violence. We, the Member States, recognize our obligations under international law to refrain from violating human rights and to protect our populations from such violence.

Backed by a consensus among Member States on the gravity of this matter, the Secretary-General's report provides us with a basis on which to move forward collectively on the issue of conflict-related sexual violence, through the United Nations. The European Union will be an active partner of the Organization in that endeavour.

Finally, with regard to another issue, let me add that the European Union welcomes resolution 1882 (2009) on children and armed conflict, which was adopted on Tuesday, 11 August. The resolution is an important step forward that will contribute to an improved situation for children worldwide.

The President: I now call on the representative of Israel.

Ms. Shalev (Israel): I too thank you, Mr. President, for your leadership in holding this very important meeting. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for honouring us with his presence this morning as we discuss the important issue of sexual violence in conflict areas.

As a sponsor of resolution 1820 (2008), Israel closely follows developments around the world concerning its implementation. Since the resolution's adoption last year, and in the nine years since the Council adopted resolution 1325 (2000), we have seen some progress on issues concerning women, peace and security.

We welcome the increased deployment of gender advisers, the routine inclusion in peacekeeping mandates of provisions for the protection of women and girls from sexual violence, and the growing awareness of the need to include women in any peace process. While all those measures are steps forward, it is clear that we still have a very long way to go.

Israel welcomes the Secretary-General's initial report on the implementation of resolution 1820 (2008) (S/2009/362), which sets out a number of serious challenges facing the international community in addressing crimes of sexual violence. One example from the report conveys the scale of the problem: there have been a staggering 200,000 cases of sexual violence in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo since the outset of hostilities. Elsewhere, in one third of the cases tried before the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, sexual violence was found to be part of a widespread and systematic attack against civilians.

The tactical use of sexual violence lies at the heart of resolution 1820 (2008), for, while rape and sexual violence are first and foremost crimes against individual women and girls, such acts are often designed to deliberately and systematically destroy the tenuous social fabric that exists during periods of conflict. The intention is to inflict suffering and instil fear. Families — and societies — bear the scars of these acts long after hostilities have ceased.

The use of sexual violence as a tool of war is surely a form of terrorism. Israel condemns it and strongly urges the Council to strengthen its tools for protecting women and girls. The Secretary-General's recent report points to a number of useful actions that Member States and the Organization can pursue. Israel supports the immediate deployment of a commission of inquiry to investigate crimes of sexual violence to several areas plagued by such crimes.

Israel also looks forward to the joint study by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs on the protection of civilian mandates. We must ensure that mandates for peacekeeping missions in areas racked by sexual violence contain explicit and unambiguous provisions for the protection of civilians from such acts. Moreover, before the renewal of such mandates, there should be a candid assessment of results, with mandates or strategies revised as necessary.

Increasing the deployment of women and gender advisers would further increase the ability of missions to effectively protect civilians from sexual abuse. Regrettably, there have been accusations of sexual misconduct committed by United Nations personnel themselves. Whenever this occurs, the reputation of all peacekeepers may be tarnished. We must be certain

that all mission personnel have been properly trained in appropriate conduct, with transparent investigation of all allegations and swift prosecution of those who abuse their position of authority. The zero-tolerance policy must be strictly enforced.

In the spirit of resolution 1325 (2000), the Women's Equal Rights Law in Israel has been amended to mandate the inclusion of women in any group appointed to peacebuilding negotiations or working towards conflict resolution. Allow me to also share that, through Israel's international aid agency, my Government organizes programmes in women's leadership and capacity-building for women's non-governmental organizations. We believe that the skills learned in these programmes can make a real difference on the ground in post-conflict recovery.

The international community has been challenged. All States must, individually and collectively, answer this challenge. Israel pledges itself to this clear international consensus, and it extends its hand to any partner in this important endeavour. We are speaking not of statistics but of devastated lives, and we should commit ourselves to getting the job done. As you yourself, Sir, and Ambassador Rice mentioned earlier this morning, if ever there was the global resolve to do it, it is now.

The President: I give the floor to the representative of Brazil.

Ms. Dunlop (Brazil): I thank you, Mr. President, for holding this open debate on women and peace and security. The gravity of the challenge posed by sexual violence against civilians in situations of armed conflict requires involving the whole membership in the discussion on ways to address the problem. I also thank the Secretary-General for his presence and his briefing.

The report before us today (S/2009/362) is deeply disturbing. The persistence of widespread or systematic rape and other forms of sexual abuse of civilians in armed conflict is simply unacceptable. As noted in that document, sexual violence is dehumanizing, inflicts intense mental and physical trauma, and is often accompanied by fear, shame and stigma. It can prolong conflict by creating a cycle of attack and counterattack, as also indicated in the report. This is all the more deplorable when perpetrators are officials, who must lead by example and fulfil clear legal and moral obligations.

Our collective indignation must go beyond statements and translate into concerted action by the international community. The several parts of the United Nations system must come together to address a problem that, although simple in its cruelty, is complex in its root causes and therefore demands a multisectoral approach.

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the agreed conclusions of the Commission on the Status of Women and the Declaration on the Protection of Women and Children in Emergency and Armed Conflict provide a clear framework for effective action. The General Assembly, the Commission on the Status of Women, the Division for the Advancement of Women, the United Nations Development Fund for Women and the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women together have done a lot and should continue their valuable work in a manner that is as coordinated as possible.

The principle of national ownership and the need for the active participation of civil society in this process cannot be overemphasized. In situations of armed conflict, where sexual violence is used or commissioned as a tactic of war in order to deliberately target civilians or as part of a widespread or systematic attack against civilian populations, the Security Council has an important role to play.

The recommendations made by the Secretary-General in his report deserve careful consideration, as they may help to prevent, monitor, report on and remedy instances of sexual violence. It is crucial that the proposed measures fully respect the functions and powers of the Security Council under the Charter and conform to the scope of resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008). In other words, the object of those measures must be widespread or systematic sexual violence in situations of armed conflict. In all other cases, the fight against this atrocity should be led by the relevant actors within the United Nations system.

Nevertheless, we must actively seek synergies and stimulate cooperation among all stakeholders. Information-gathering is a good example. My delegation supports the enhanced collection of data by peacekeeping missions on widespread or systematic sexual violence in situations of armed conflict. Such data should be shared with other relevant principal

organs, the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Commission on the Status of Women as appropriate, since it would help to ensure that international action is not merely punitive but transformative as well.

Widespread or systematic sexual violence in armed conflict should not be fought only by means of vigorous law enforcement, prosecution, military discipline or sanctions. If these measures are to be effective in the long run, they should be accompanied by serious efforts to address some of the causes of the problem, such as discrimination, prejudice, poor education, institutional fragility and lack of resources. We trust that, together, national Governments, the competent parts of the United Nations system and donors can achieve a lot in this area.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate Brazil's political and practical commitment to international efforts to combat all forms of violence against women, especially sexual violence against women and girls. We also support the Council in its implementation of resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008). My delegation hopes that this debate will lead to improved action by Member States and the United Nations as a whole.

The President: I give the floor to the representative of Switzerland.

Mrs. Grau (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): I thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this open debate on the subject of women and peace and security. We commend the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report (S/2009/362) on the implementation of resolution 1820 (2008) and for his recommendations.

Last year's adoption of resolution 1820 (2008) was a major achievement. The resolution focuses on sexual violence during and after conflicts, which is one of the three pillars of resolution 1325 (2000). The Secretary-General's report describes the measures taken by the international community to prevent and combat gender-based human rights violations. In this regard, Switzerland has supported various multilateral initiatives, such as the United Nations Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict.

It is deplorable that sexual violence continues to be perpetrated on a widespread basis, in particular as a tactic of war. Women and girls are particularly at risk and represent the majority of victims. We urge the Security Council to call on all parties to armed conflict to strictly comply with their obligations under international law, in particular international humanitarian law. We call on the Council to use the instruments at its disposal, such as targeted sanctions and the mandates of peacekeeping operations, to combat sexual violence in armed conflict.

Switzerland supports the establishment of an appropriate mechanism within the Security Council. That would facilitate consideration and action in line with the measures taken by parties to armed conflict to comply with their obligations under international law. In order to ensure a consistent approach, that mechanism should provide for interaction with the Security Council's Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict and its informal expert group on the protection of civilians.

In that context, Switzerland welcomes the adoption three days ago of resolution 1882 (2009), on children and armed conflict. It makes sexual violence an additional criterion for listing parties to an armed conflict in the annexes of the Secretary-General's reports. That resolution is a major decision in strengthening the protection agenda of the Council. That is why my country decided to join in sponsoring it. However, it is regrettable that that protection formula no longer applies once the victims reach 18 years of age.

International law obliges States not only to refrain from committing violations. It also requires them to take concrete measures to protect individuals from sexual violence, bring to justice the perpetrators and provide reparations for the victims. Yet, the implementation of those measures remains weak. States should do more to reform their legal systems in order to bring perpetrators to justice and to protect victims and treat them with respect at hearings. The continued support of the international community is necessary to help States to develop and to strengthen their national capacities in that area.

In a broader context, today's debate emphasizes one key aspect of resolution 1325 (2000). For resolution 1820 (2008) to have a sustainable impact, an integrated approach must be adopted. Greater participation of women in peacekeeping missions would render the protection and support of victims of sexual violence more effective. It is also of great

importance for the prevention and combating of sexual violence that women be more often involved in peace processes as mediators, representatives of the parties to the conflict or civil society partners.

Consequently, with a view to the tenth anniversary of the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), I wish to highlight the importance of implementing resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008) in tandem.

The President: Our last speaker for this morning's session of our meeting is the representative of South Africa, to whom I now give the floor.

Mr. Sangqu (South Africa): South Africa wishes to express its appreciation for the Secretary-General's briefing and welcomes his report, contained in document S/2009/362, on the implementation of resolution 1820 (2008). Last year, we were a sponsor of Security Council resolution 1820 (2008) because of our principled resolve resolutely to address sexual violence against women and girls in conflict-affected situations and to ensure more effective protection and assistance for survivors.

This first report of the Secretary-General, which addresses widespread and systematic sexual violence in armed conflicts, provides yet another opportunity for us to assess the concrete and specific efforts made in the implementation of both resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008) and the role of the United Nations in such efforts.

We remain convinced that women are active agents of change and play a meaningful role in the recovery and reintegration of their families and communities. Women are central in promoting democracy, good governance and reconciliation and in building peace and development after the guns fall silent. Their participation should thus be promoted in the whole continuum of the resolution of conflicts, from early warning, mediation, peace talks and peacekeeping to post-conflict recovery and peacebuilding. The United Nations therefore should be encouraged to promote the effective participation of women in decision-making, peace talks and other processes towards the resolution of conflicts.

The present reality, though, is that women and girls are the first casualties of war. From the beginning of a war, women and girls are besieged not only by combatants and other armed elements, but also by new societal pressures and expectations brought about by the new conflict environments. Sexual violence in conflict areas is inextricably linked to gender inequality, and it is imperative that we strongly advocate for the equal participation and full involvement of women in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security.

In South Africa, August is Women's Month. During this month, we celebrate and commemorate the role of women in the struggle for a free, non-racial and non-sexist South Africa. Specifically, on 9 August we celebrate the heroic contribution of women in the struggle against the oppressive laws of the apartheid regime, marked by the march by women of all races to the Union Buildings 53 years ago. Our democratic Government has made big and serious strides in advancing the cause of the development of women. Furthermore, during this Women's Month, South Africa will strengthen its partnership in the 365 Days of Activism campaign for no violence against women and children. South Africa's legislative framework gives impetus to our international commitment to gender equality and our commitment to conflict management and resolution.

South Africa's ratification of Southern African Development Community, African Union and international gender mainstreaming instruments is a strong indicator of our country's commitment to gender equality in general and, in particular, to gender mainstreaming in conflict prevention, resolution and management and in post-conflict reconstruction and development.

Consistent with those efforts and in order to promote effective participation of women in peacekeeping, peacebuilding and security, the African Union has declared the period 2010 to 2020 as the African Women's Decade. It further committed that the organs of the African Union, the regional economic communities and member States should use the frameworks of resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008) to integrate their gender policies, programmes and activities on conflict resolution processes. It further calls for the creation of regional consultative platforms for information and knowledge exchange and harmonization of strategies.

Consequently, it is our view that United Nations Member States should develop enhanced policies and strategies for local ownership and implementation of resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008), with the

objective of empowering women at various stages of conflict and its aftermath, as recommended in the Secretary-General's report. Related to that is the importance of ensuring that the institutional structures at the United Nations have the capacity to monitor implementation of resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008). In that regard, South Africa would like to commend the establishment of the coordination group, which includes all relevant organizations and agencies, to pay special attention to those issues so that momentum is not lost. We also commend the Office of the Secretary-General for its global campaign "Unite to end violence against women".

Sexual violence is deeply dehumanizing and inflicts intense mental and physical trauma; victims always find it very difficult to easily disclose their experiences. The impunity associated with sexual violence is of great concern to my delegation. In that regard, urgent intervention is required that will prioritize the promotion of sound systems in the areas of transitional justice, the rule of law and reform of the judiciary so as to ensure that countries put an end to impunity and prosecute those accused of all forms of sexual violence and violence against women and children in armed conflicts.

My delegation advocates the strengthening of existing mechanisms in order to make them effective and credible and the investigation of sexual violence and crime in conflict situations, including reviewing the effectiveness of programmes and prevention strategies. South Africa supports the recommendations by the Secretary-General on the need to establish more and better data collection systems in order to enhance the understanding of various forms of sexual violence in conflict situations and their aftermath.

South Africa remains deeply concerned at the plight of children caught in armed conflict. We welcomed and associated ourselves with the adoption of Security Council resolution 1882 (2009) on 4 August 2009, which, in paragraph 3, requests the Secretary-General to expand the criteria of the triggers to "killing and maiming of children and/or rape and other sexual violence against children".

In conclusion, South Africa remains committed to the full implementation of Security Council resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008). The international community has an obligation to ensure that the rights of women and children are protected, especially in conflict-affected areas. The equal and effective participation of women and their full involvement in decision-making and peace processes will contribute to the promotion and maintenance of peace and security. Only through the concerted efforts of all stakeholders, including the United Nations, can sexual violence against vulnerable groups be stopped.

The President: There are a number of speakers remaining on my list for this meeting. I intend, with the concurrence of members of the Council, to suspend the meeting until 3 p.m.

The meeting was suspended at 1.15 p.m.